/34 cont./

515 hygiene, cannot be characterized as filthy and dirty perspicuously. Of this same opinion is the author of Los Kamarakotos, who were so exactly observed by him in all externals and visible particulars in his few weeks of living among them.

To state, as do some, that the Indians are dirty animals who wallow in filth, who abhor /35/ cleanliness and soap, etc., is to speak from memory, repeating old saws, which were more or less true according to the tribes to which these epithets might be applied. On my part, I cannot but confess that in the usual Motilón rancherías, cleanliness was at the level of shoe-blacking.

The popular proverb warns us that "every comparison limps on some foot," but it would limp much worse if one tried to compare it with what does not admit of a paragon. For this reason one should not compare, for instance, the hygiene and cleanliness of the Indians with that of a doctor or a palace-dweller.

The Indian should be compared with the poor people of our cities or, even better, with our country people. With these for paragons, we dare to maintain that they better those of our city backwaters and reach, more or less, the level of humble country people.

But it happens that, in general, those who visit the Indians are people from the top of the heap, people under glass, who bring almost every comfort with them and, therefore, suffer severe shock when they find themselves up to the neck in country life and see themselves beside real men of the soil who are living "nudi in nuda homo." And that is why they come back speaking of the horrors of the Indians. In contrast those accustomed to living among them and like them constrained by the harsh realities of life speak more benignly or less harshly of the natives. Thus, for example, Fr. Carry-Elwes, S.J., who says of the Indian women of Teuonó -- slope of Roroima -- that they reminded him of the housewives of his own Ireland or of the lands of Normandy.

/35 cont./

264 515 76. Again such ridiculous things as drinking cassave by all those eating together into the same olla or dish and drinking from the same camaza or cup are still the etiquette of the majority of the human race and remind us of the Biblical "qui intingit manum mecum in catino." And the chewed 273 kachirí, 262 which has now almost entirely given way to that 515 mashed with little mills or wooden mashers, could not but remind us of pap, which not too many years ago was given to children, or who knows is still given them.

000 Further, these things are neither so repugnant nor so dangerous as is assumed. And thus, for example, Ramón y Cajal, who in one of his humorous remarks defined the kiss as "an interchange of oral microbes," and to those who took the matter too seriously later said in his "Charlas de Café /Coffee Chats/" that such microbes were harmless from the hygienic point of view.

302 We would like to say very much the same thing regarding the grotesque paintings with annatto, caruto, and other vegetable dyes which are used by men and women /36/ for personal adornment on dance days and during periods when they are love, since they are not different from the cosmetics and annointments of our maidens.

262 And the worms, which develop in fallen trunks of the moriche and other palms in a state of natural decay, the bachaos, and other similar insects at the time of reproducing, the young of certain insects in the larval or pupal state, which the Indians eat, are, neither in their origin, smell, or taste (I speak from experience) in the slightest degree repugnant nor inferior to worm cheese, so highly regarded in some parts of Europe. Everything is a matter of custom!

515 [827] 77. The Indians in their natural life bathe quite frequently; and they are greatly repelled by the smell of the porcupine, which is what they call underarm sweat, and which is one of the reasons for their aversion to individuals of the Negro race.

/36 cont./

356 But to smell of smoke is an unavoidable thing in their persons,
[372] houses, and hammocks, since with considerable truth and not without a certain humor they themselves say that fire is their covering.

78. Indian women are familiar with the broom, tutumai or patá kuimatók, and around the house, for ten meters or more, they are always making by sweeping, pruning, and with shells, a border where generally grow up cotton plants, tobacco, and cucurbitaceous plants and sometimes some red lilies called pareurai.

825 79. It is true that the Indians do not always manage to keep themselves free of common parasites, the origin of which they attribute to vultures, especially the women who have long hair, nor are they free of chigoes, friends of dust and all but impossible to exterminate on dirt floors.

But are not these insects, under the name of woods animals, perhaps still living among us also, giving rise to many commentaries and statements?

825 In addition, chigoes on male children are considered to be an augury of the fact that when they are adult they will be very diligent and hard working, and in female children, that they will be good looking and very sought after.

This is one of the reasons why sometimes the flea-bitten might be considered to be almost elegant.

Anyone who knows country life well will understand the non-problem and the total nonexistence of facilities for the satisfaction of personal physiological necessities.

515 80. In corroboration with what has already been set down
177 by the observer of the Kamarakoto Indians, I must state that the Indians who are filthiest in their persons and in their homes are almost always the /37/ semicivilized ones, that is to say, those who neither live in the state of nature nor have assimilated our civilization; they lose what they had and they do not acquire what is ours, except by half measures; for instance, they might have clothing and lack thread and soap, or have shoes and no stockings, etc., etc.

/37 cont./

829 81. Before putting an end to this brief study, I should ad-
522 vise that by the natural law of retaliation, the Indians, acute observers of our customs and very fond of humor, also make fun of our hygienic customs and of some of our foods, which are likewise repugnant to them. Thus, for example, pork, eggs, etc. They also laugh at our corrals and houses for domestic animals, which are not always sufficiently separated from the houses and which do not smell like a bed of roses. And of our country privies, I have heard from them an infinite number of satirical remarks very similar to the popular saying, "What is it that the rich gather up, which the poor throw away?" with reference to nasal secretions.

● 515 82. To poke fun at dirty persons -- for such a person is
539 never lacking among the Indians, as everywhere else -- who flee from bathing like a cat from water, and abhor cleanliness as the devil the cross, they have the story of the Indian kamotipán, that is to say, the one who had mushrooms and squash sprout all over him, like ears all over his body, so that they made a noise when he walked along, so that game and fish fled and he had to be submitted to a great scraping and bathing by frogs, after which he became a good fisher and hunter.

Chapter X

What Is There To Their Corpulence and Healthiness?

83. Exaggeration in the reports. 84. The legend of the golden age. 85. Endemic diseases. 86. Are they not perfect herbists? 87. Medicine and magic: curers and enchanters. 88. Charms. 89. An Egyptian charm and a Pemón one. 90. Spiritual religion and corporal medicine.

834 With them, and of course this is well established as a general rule, clothes are
291 not worn because of modesty, but modesty arises from the use of clothes. Boys who had just started wearing loincloths would often remove them when swimming, but then if someone was around they would put a hand over the pubic region on emerging from the water and would turn their backs while donning the loincloth again.

291 No particular modesty is shown regarding other parts of the body. The
177 women would not visit us without dresses, but it was evident that the motive was not modesty but pride. A dress is not primarily a covering, but an ornament, a sign of prosperity, and an emblem of the desire to appear civilized and sophisticated to us. They have not yet been worn for sufficient time to induce the feeling that the parts that they cover (and that the native apron does not)
[853] are shameful or should be covered on moral grounds. They are so made as not effectively to conceal the breasts and women's dresses are, indeed, purposely made not to cover the breasts closely, for the practical reason of leaving the breast easily available to an infant, the dress never being removed or especially opened for this purpose. No man ever hesitated to remove any and all of his clothing, if he had any, except his loincloth, or to visit us if he had no other clothing. This less insistence, as compared with the women, on having European clothing betokens less pride, not that the clothing is less desirable as a symbol of what they believe to be progress, but mainly that male clothing is
[30] considered (and is in fact) less decorative. Similarly few women would think of appearing in society without as full a complement of necklaces and other ornaments as possible, while the men, not entirely above such frippery, considered it far less essential to their dignity and importance.

Cleanliness.

364 Within broad limits, the Kamarakotos are clean people. There is no great accumulation of refuse around the houses, partly because their diet produces little garbage and partly because they are reasonably careful to clean
[171] away what little refuse there is. A Kamarakoto settlement is not entirely odorless but certainly has none of the nauseous stench so often mentioned by travelers as heralding approach to an Indian village in other parts of South America.[226]
296 They do not mind a considerable amount of dirt on their clothing, but periodi-
● 515 cally do wash all clothing, getting it quite clean by pounding and strenuous effort and bleaching it in the sun.[227] They live near streams that are safe for bathing and all enter the water freely and wash themselves at frequent intervals so that their persons are usually remarkably clean.

226, 227 [see footnotes on p. 333, category 116 - Analyst]